Forest dwellers as real protectors of forests

921. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that forest dwellers are the real protectors of forests and wild-life;

(b) if so, whether Government are taking any steps for the welfare of forest dwellers; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) It is a fact that the forest fringe villagers are involved in the protection, regeneration and development of forests, and preservation of wildlife.

(b) and (c) Under Joint Forest Management (JFM) resolutions of the State Governments, the beneficiaries are entitled to a share in usufructs like grasses, lops and tops, branches, minor forest produce and timber, in the proportion prescribed in the State JFM resolution.

Losses due to fire in pine forests

†922. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the financial losses caused yearly by fire in pine forests, State-wise;

(b) whether Government provide financial aid to the States having pine forests every year;

(c) if so, the details of the assistance provided in this regard to Uttaranchal during the last five years;

(d) whether his Ministry proposes to increase the assistance being provided therefor in view of the environmental importance of the State; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) There is no standard and uniform method for assessment of financial losses caused by forest fires. It is only the direct losses to forest property like trees, plantations and forest produce which is reported while losses to soil, productivity, water resources, ecology etc., are not reported.

According to reports available from States, the financial losses in Eastern/North Eastern Himalayan States (Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Darjeeling area of West Bengal), the financial loss is either nil or insignificant.

Regarding Western Himalayan States (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal), the financial losses reported by States, during last three years, are as under:—

(Rs. in lakhs)

SI.No. State	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
1. Jammu and Kashmir	NR	NR	NR
2. Himachal Pradesh	40.26	74.30	NR
3. Uttaranchal	2.70	6.50	7.00

NR: Not Reported.

(b) Central financial aid is provided to all States and Union Territories including those having pine forests for protection of forests under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme called Integrated Forest Protection Scheme since 2002-03. Prior to this, Central assistance was provided under the Centrally Sponsored scheme called Forest Fire Control and Management (FFCM) since 2000-01.

(c) Details of financial assistance provided under integrated Forest Protection Scheme to Uttaranchal during the last five years is as under:—

year	Amount of Central Assistance released (Rs. in lakhs)
2000-01	56.41
2001-02	74.50
2002-03	98.07
2003-04	105.70
2004-05 (upto 30.11.04)	240.00

(d) and (e) The table above indicates increasing pattern in the Central assistance provided to the State since creation of the State in 2000-01. The assistance is subject to availability and utilisation of funds. Besides, the State share for North Eastern region, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal has been reduced during 2004-05 to ten per cent from the earlier 25 per cent under the Integrated Forest Protection Scheme.

Threat to wildlife habitat

923. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently some 40 wildlife organizations and environmentalists have represented to Government that the threat to wildlife habitats in the country is on the increase;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken to protect India's wildlife?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Forest land and wildlife habitat are protected by various laws including the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. All cases of diversion and use of forest as well as wildlife habitats for non forestry purposes are regulated under the provisions of these laws and the orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court issued from time to time. The cases are examined by the expert committees and decisions are taken after due consideration of laws and policies of the Government as well as the directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Mount Everest on danger list

924. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that conservationists have asked the UN to place Mount Everest on a danger list because its snow-cover is retreating rapidly; and